

# WOKINGHAM BOROUGH

## 'Shaping our Future'



### STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (SCI) March 2019

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Planning affects the lives of all of us:

- the homes we live in;
- the leisure facilities we use;
- the places we go shopping;
- the open spaces we relax in;
- the places we go to work;
- the ways we travel

1.2 All of these (and more) are there because of planning decisions. For a lot of people planning is something they only get involved with when development has a direct impact on them. Even then, involvement can often be frustratingly too late to really influence the process.

1.3 By getting involved in planning from its earliest stages, residents, businesses and other interested parties can take an active role in shaping decisions about the future of where we live and work, and help create better and more sustainable communities beyond just the immediate places where they live and work.

1.4 This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) will involve people in planning decisions. It also sets out what we expect applicants / developers to do to consult communities on proposed developments. The document includes an explanation of what an SCI is, provides a brief overview of the planning system, and then explains how you can get involved in planning decisions and what you can expect from us along the way.



## What is a Statement of Community Involvement and why are we producing a new one?

1.5 Firstly, what actually is a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)? An SCI is a document that sets out how we find out what you think and how we expect applicants to go about doing the same. This means how consultation will take place with the community, businesses and others during the preparation of planning policy and the preparation and consideration of planning applications. Councils are legally<sup>1</sup> required to produce an SCI and make it available on their website for the public to access.

<sup>1</sup> Contained within Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

- 1.6** The SCI provides clarity on the extent of community involvement that will take place. It sets out clear consultation procedures and standards that will be followed, providing transparency for residents, businesses and others.
- 1.7** The SCI 2019 has been produced because changes to national planning policy and guidance meant the previous version (adopted in 2014) was no longer up to date. For example, it is now a requirement for an SCI to incorporate guidance on the support that is available for communities producing neighbourhood plans (see chapter 5 for more details).
- 1.8** As a result of these changes, a review of the SCI was undertaken. A draft revised SCI was consulted on for 6 weeks from 9 November to 21 December 2018 and was subject to the same consultation procedures as draft supplementary planning documents (see chapter 6). This document supersedes the 2014 SCI.

## What is planning?

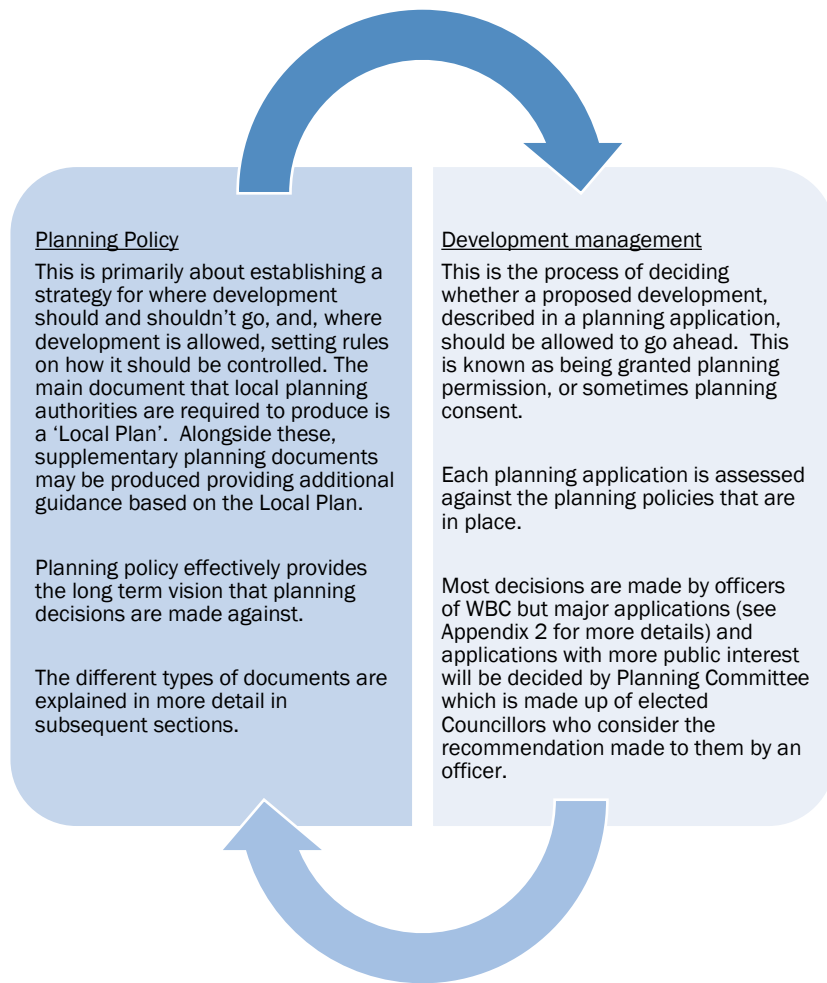


**1.9** The planning system in England manages the use and development of buildings and land with the overall aim of creating better places to live, work and play.

**1.10** The system helps society to strike a balance between allowing development to meet public need (by providing homes, jobs, shops and transport) and enhancing and conserving the environment. Without a planning system, anyone could construct whatever buildings they liked or use land in any way they wanted, no matter what effect this would have on places and other

people in the area. There are two main parts to the planning system:

Figure 1: The Main parts of the planning system



**1.11** WBC is the Local Planning Authority for the borough, and, as a unitary authority, is responsible for both planning policy and development management. In some areas of the country, responsibility for some issues are split between the district council and the county council.

## 2 Wokingham's approach to consultation

### Who should get involved?



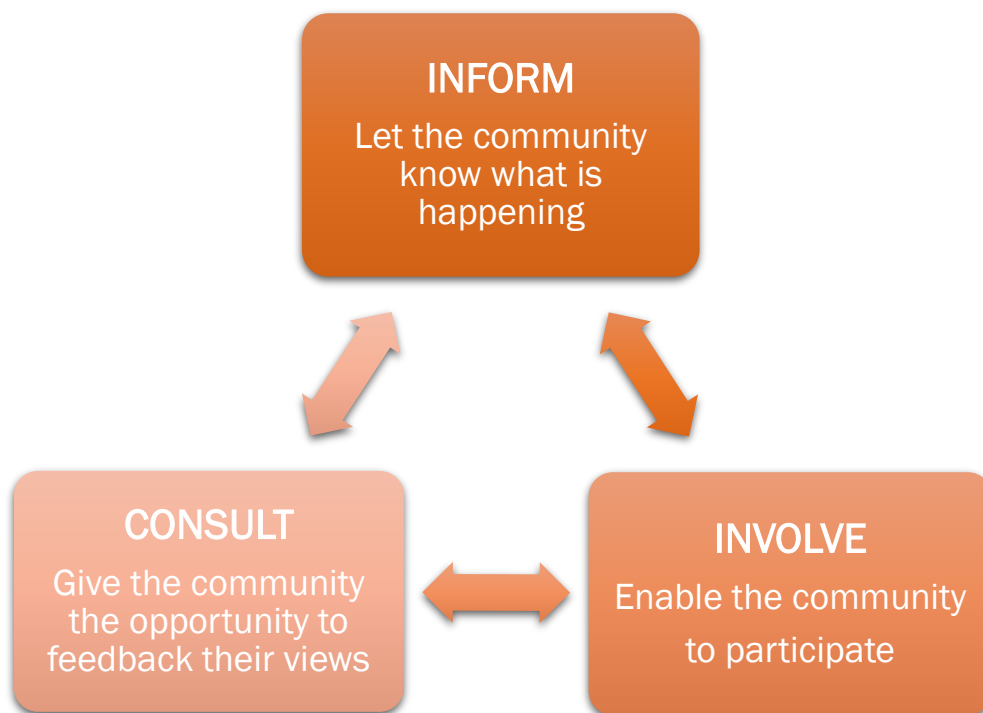
**2.1** Planning is more effective when the people it affects are an integral part of the process. Greater involvement can help shape planning solutions that maximise the positive outcome and minimise any negatives. Although some decisions are difficult, through engagement the choices will be better understood and the outcome is more likely to be the most suitable.

**2.2** The importance of good community engagement in planning is set out in national government policy in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF). The wider community who are affected by planning issues

includes not only residents but also a range of local businesses and public and private organisations (including national bodies such as Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England) that provide expert advice on key issues. Landowners and developers are key stakeholders in the planning system given that they influence the land that might be available for development and are the ones who submit planning applications. Landowners and developers are encouraged to engage positively with WBC and residents in the planning policy process and when drawing up proposals for development.

**2.3** WBC looks for its duty to engage the community in planning matters to be matched by the efforts of developers, through the use of the Three Principles (Figure 2):

Figure 2: The Three Main Principles of Engagement



**2.4** The system for planning where homes and other development will take place in the future is complicated but the key messages are simple and we are determined to help as many people join the conversation as possible. People often have important information and local knowledge of where they live, work and visit, which can be invaluable in making the best decisions.

**2.5** As part of any community engagement, WBC will meet the following standards and expects all others who undertake consultations to do the same:

- Involvement will be open to all regardless of gender, faith, race, disability, sexuality, age and social deprivation.
- We will seek views of interested and affected parties as early as possible.
- Consultation documents will be clear and concise and avoid unnecessary jargon, without understating the complexities of any decision.
- Consultation outcomes will be made accessible to the public (see following chapters for how).

**2.6** Every effort will be made to consult and accommodate the needs of protected groups. For projects and plans undertaken, an Equality Impact Assessment statement will be prepared in line with Council policy.

**2.7** WBC will not pretend that planning decisions are a completely free choice. Decisions need to be made within legal requirements, have regard to national planning policy and guidance, and take into account technical evidence. There will also be differences of opinion. WBC wishes however, to reach as many interested parties as possible, so that decisions take into account local opinion.

**2.8** The following chapters provide greater detail on the methods of consultation that we will use in the preparation of different types of planning policy documents and on planning applications.

## 3 Local Plan

### What is a Local Plan?

- 3.1** Local Plans are the main planning policy document. They set out priorities and policies for development, including the vision for managing development within the area.
- 3.2** Local plans must include 'strategic policies' to address the development and land use priorities of the Local Planning Authority area. 'Strategic policies' should look over a minimum period of 15 years and the kinds of issues they should cover are set out at paragraph 20 of the [NPPF](#).
- 3.3** Local plans also must include non-strategic policies which will include things like sustainable design and construction of new development. Local Plans will also include allocations which set out where particular types of development will take place over the plan period (usually around 15 years) and also contain a key diagram showing important constraints and geographical contexts of the borough. The broad process is outlined in the figure below:



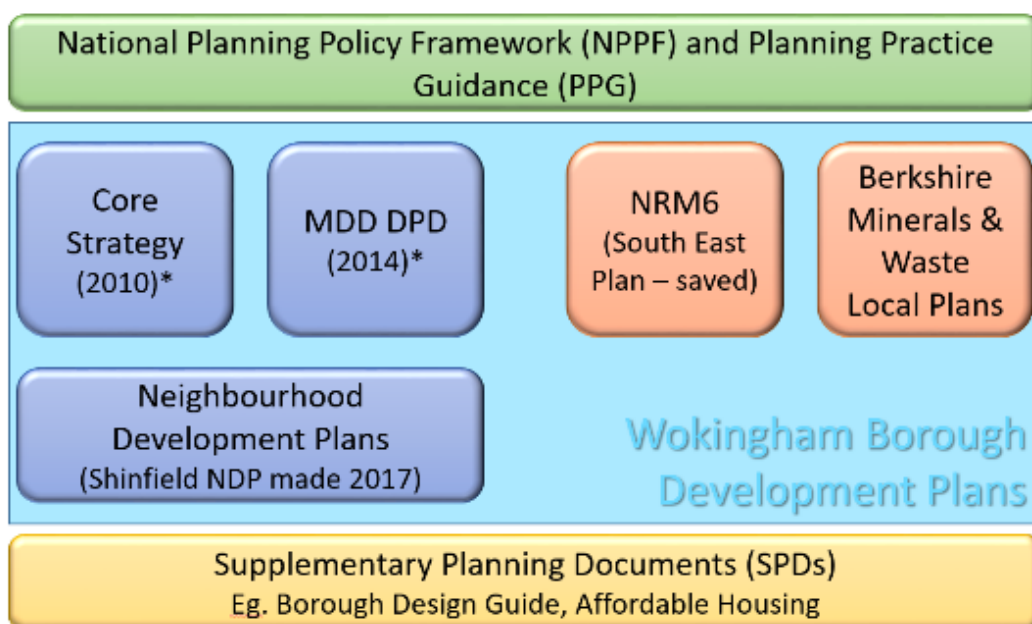
Figure 3: Local Plan Process





- 3.4** The Local Planning Authority has to draw up its local plan in consultation with the community. This involves numerous stages, from evidence gathering and scoping what should be covered, to drafting a strategy and consulting on this, and it then must also be considered at an independent public examination and gain Council approval before it can be adopted. Table 1 below provides an overview of these stages in the first column.
- 3.5** The Local Plan forms part of what is known as the Development Plan (which also includes ‘made’<sup>2</sup> Neighbourhood Plans). Planning legislation requires that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

Figure 4: Development Plan



\*These two plan documents will be replaced by the Local Plan Update when adopted.

### What consultation methods will we use?

- 3.6** There are minimum consultation requirements set out in the regulations that we must follow in preparing a Local Plan. We will however strive to go beyond the minimum that is required. Table 1 below sets out our consultation responsibilities and also states things that we would like to do but may not always be able to.

<sup>2</sup> ‘made’ is the technical term used in the regulations which simply means ‘adopted’. Likewise, any reference to ‘making’ a neighbourhood plan means ‘adopting’ a neighbourhood plan.

Table 1 – Local Plan consultation methods

Stage of preparation and intended outcomes	Minimum Consultation methods	Possible additional methods	Duration
<p><b>1. Community engagement and strategy shaping</b> – this stage is about getting early meaningful input on what the plan should contain and then gathering views on principles that help to inform what might be the best strategy to manage development. We will take into account all representations alongside national planning policy and technical studies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written/Email consultations with statutory consultees, general consultees on our live database, other relevant stakeholders, individuals and organisations who have expressed a wish to be consulted or have previously made comments;</li> <li>• Making consultation documents available on the Council’s website and hard copies available at the Council offices;</li> <li>• Making any appropriate supporting evidence base documents available on the website</li> <li>• Invite representations on the document through appropriately placed press advertisement, notices on the Council’s website, articles/information in the council’s existing forms of communication such as the Borough News and the Community Forums;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate use of social media to advertise consultations and seek comments;</li> <li>• Arranging public events and/or attending existing events (such as festivals or public forums) so that we come to where people are likely to be;</li> <li>• Arranging targeted meetings with a range of specific representative groups as appropriate. We will strive to be flexible in the times of day or points in the week these take place in order to reach the most people.</li> </ul>	<p>Minimum 6 weeks (excluding bank holidays)</p>
<p><b>2. Draft Plan consultation</b> – this will be where views are sought on our initial thoughts on the best strategy to manage development, taking account of the views expressed through early evidence gathering, technical studies and the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written/Email consultations with statutory consultees, general consultees on our live database, other relevant stakeholders, individuals and organisations who were notified at stage 1 as well as any additional individuals or organisations that have since expressed a wish to be consulted or have previously made comments;</li> <li>• Making consultation documents available on the Council’s website and hard copies available at the Council offices;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate use of social media to advertise consultations and seek comments;</li> <li>• Arranging public events and/or attending existing events (such as festivals or public forums) so that we come to where people are likely to be ;</li> <li>• Arranging targeted meetings with a range of specific representative groups as appropriate. We will strive to be flexible in the times of day or points in</li> </ul>	<p>Minimum 6 weeks (excluding bank holidays)</p>

<p>requirements of national planning policy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making any appropriate supporting evidence base documents available on the website</li> <li>• Invite representations on the document through appropriately placed press advertisement, notices on the Council's website, articles/information in the council's existing forms of communication such as the Borough News and the Community Forums;</li> </ul>	<p>the week these take place in order to reach the most people.</p>	
<p><b>3. Publication plan consultation</b> – this is where, having considered the views and evidence gathered in previous stages, a submission Plan will be published for formal consultation where views are invited specifically on the 'soundness'<sup>3</sup> of the plan, whether it is legally compliant, and whether the Duty to Co-operate<sup>4</sup> has been achieved.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written/Email consultations with statutory consultees, general consultees on our live database, other relevant stakeholders, individuals and organisations who were notified at stage 1 as well as any additional individuals or organisations that have since expressed a wish to be consulted or have previously made comments – anyone that has made representations on earlier stages will be notified of future plan progress unless they have opted not to be notified;</li> <li>• Making consultation documents available on the Council's website and hard copies available at the Council offices;</li> <li>• Making any appropriate supporting evidence base documents available on the website</li> <li>• Invite representations on the document through appropriately placed press advertisement, notices on the Council's website, articles/information in the council's existing forms of communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate use of social media to advertise consultations and seek comments;</li> <li>• Arranging public events and/or attending existing events (such as festivals or public forums) so that we come to where people are likely to be;</li> <li>• Arranging targeted meetings with a range of specific representative groups as appropriate. We will strive to be flexible in the times of day or points in the week these take place in order to reach the most people.</li> </ul>	<p>Minimum 6 weeks (excluding bank holidays)</p>

<sup>3</sup> This is set out in the NPPF at paragraph 35: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/728643/Revised\\_NPPF\\_2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/728643/Revised_NPPF_2018.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> For more information see the Planning Practice Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/duty-to-cooperate>

	such as the Borough News and the Community Forums;		
<p><b>4. Examination</b> – The Examination is run by an independent Planning Inspector supported by an independent Programme Officer. The Inspector will consider all representations and evidence, then identify areas which they would like to investigate further. They will set specific questions and a programme to do this, and hold hearing sessions. Based on all of this they will then form a view on whether or not the plan is legally compliant and is sound<sup>5</sup>. This will be recorded through a formal report.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the council’s website to raise awareness of the Examination</li> <li>• Publish all relevant Examination documents on the council’s website</li> <li>• Make a hard copy version of the plan available at the Council offices.</li> <li>• Make any documents produced by the Inspector – including their Report detailing their recommendations – available to view on the website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In addition to following all statutory requirements we will also make use of social media and planning bulletins as appropriate</li> <li>• Make hard copies available at other suitable locations around the borough as considered appropriate</li> </ul>	At least 6 weeks before the Examination in Public is due to start
<p><b>5. Adoption</b> – this is when the plan goes through the Council’s internal political sign off process and agreement is reached to adopt the plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make available for inspection the adopted Local Plan along with an Adoption Statement; Sustainability Appraisal Report; and how and where these can be viewed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish updates through the website, social media, and planning bulletins as appropriate regarding the Council sign-off process to adopt the plan and publicise the adoption through these methods.</li> <li>• Make paper copies of the documents available subject to fees</li> </ul>	Documents will be made available in accordance with the Council’s Constitution

<sup>5</sup> See footnote 2

## How We Will Use Your Comments?

- 3.7** Any comments and representations made on the plan during the public engagement stages will be recorded by the Council and used to amend the plan if appropriate to do so. The comments that are received from the community involvement exercises will form part of the evidence base for the plan.
- 3.8** For each stage of consultation undertaken, we will produce a Statement of Consultation which summarises all the comments received and how these comments have been used to update the consultation document or inform the strategy moving forward. Where comments have been raised that cannot be addressed, this will also be set out in the Statement of Consultation. Where there are comments received which are not directly relevant to the consultation in question, these will be shared with the relevant people within the council.

## 4 Supplementary Planning Documents

### What is a Supplementary Planning Document?

**4.1** Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) provide additional guidance to support specific Local Plan policies. They may provide guidance on a topic area (e.g. on design, affordable housing) or provide guidance for a site or sites. SPDs do not set new policy or allocate land, but add further detail to the contents of a Local Plan. So SPDs are not part of the development plan (see Figure 4) but they are a consideration when deciding planning applications.

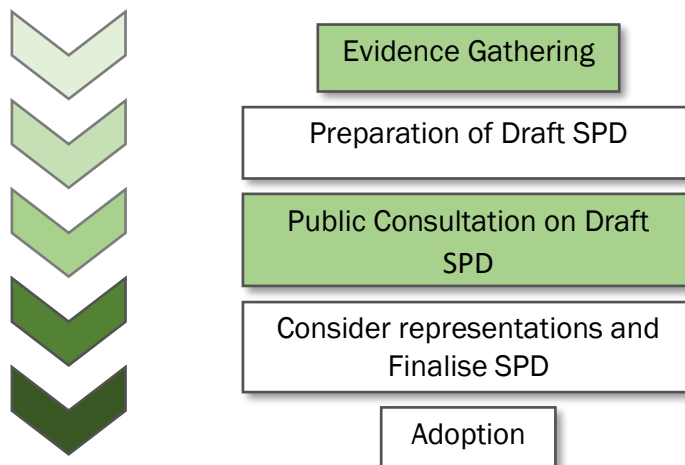


**4.2** The process for preparing an SPD is similar to the initial stages of a Local Plan. However, as they expand upon existing policy, they are not subject to independent examination by a planning Inspector. More information on the process is detailed below.

Figure 5: The SPD process

#### Key

■ Public Engagement Stages



For all policy documents, consultations can be viewed online by following the links or using the search function on the [Council's website](#).

### What consultation methods will we use?

**4.3** As with Local Plan documents there are minimum consultation requirements set out in the regulations that we must follow. We will however strive to go beyond the minimum that is required of us. Table 2 below also sets out things that we would like to do but may not always be able to.

Table 2 – SPD consultation methods

Stage of preparation and intended outcomes	Minimum Consultation methods	Possible additional methods	Duration
<p><b>1. Evidence Gathering (including scoping consultation if appropriate)</b> - this stage is about getting early meaningful input on what the SPD should contain. We will take account of all representations, technical studies and the requirements of national planning policy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation with statutory bodies on the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening and Habitat Regulations Assessment (if required).</li> <li>• Consultation with councillors on the scope and content of the SPD.</li> <li>• Targeted informal consultation will also be undertaken, with relevant agencies, stakeholders, service providers, parish/town councils, local groups and residents where relevant.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted written/Email consultations on any Scoping document with statutory consultees and a with general consultees on our live database, other relevant stakeholders, individuals and organisations;</li> <li>• Making the Consultation document available on the Council’s website and hard copies available at the Council Planning offices</li> <li>• Inviting representation on the document through press advertisements and a notice on the Council’s website.</li> <li>• Appropriate use of social media to advertise consultations and seek comments;</li> <li>• Arranging public events and/or attending existing events (such as festivals or public forums) so that we come to where people are likely to be;</li> <li>• Arranging targeted meetings with a range of specific representative groups as appropriate. We will strive to be flexible in the times of day or points in the week these take place in order to reach the most people.</li> </ul>	<p>Minimum 4 weeks where formal consultation proposed</p>
<p><b>2. Draft SPD preparation and consultation draft</b> - this will be where views are sought</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written/Email consultations with statutory consultees, general consultees on our live database,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate use of social media to advertise consultations and seek comments;</li> </ul>	<p>Minimum 4 weeks excluding bank holidays</p>

<p>on our initial thoughts on the best way to approach the topic area of the SPD taking account of the views expressed through early evidence gathering, technical studies and the requirements of national policy.</p>	<p>other relevant stakeholders, individuals and organisations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making consultation documents available on the Council’s website and hard copies available at the Council offices;</li> <li>• Making any appropriate supporting evidence base documents available on the website</li> <li>• Invite representations on the document through appropriately placed press advertisement, notices on the Council’s website, articles/information in the council’s existing forms of communication such as the Borough News and the Community Forums;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arranging public events and/or attending existing events (such as festivals or public forums) so that we come to where people are likely to be;</li> <li>• Arranging targeted meetings with a range of specific representative groups as appropriate. We will strive to be flexible in the times of day or points in the week these take place in order to reach the most people.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>3. Finalise the SPD</b> – where we make changes to the SPD based on the comments received, where justified</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comments received will be made available on the council's website along with a summary of their content and a response to each of the points made.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further consultation may be undertaken if responses lead to a significant change of direction.</li> </ul>	<p>Timing of re-consultation to be determined as appropriate</p>
<p><b>4. Adoption</b> – this is when the SPD goes through the Council’s internal political sign off process and agreement is reached to adopt it so it can be considered when determining planning applications.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make available for inspection the adopted Local Plan along with an Adoption Statement; Sustainability Appraisal Report; and how and where these can be viewed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish updates through the website, social media, and planning bulletins as appropriate regarding the Council sign-off process to adopt the plan and publicise the adoption through these methods.</li> <li>• Make paper copies of the documents available subject to fees</li> </ul>	<p>Documents will be made available in accordance with the Council’s Constitution</p>



## How We Will Use Your Comments?

- 4.4** Any comments and representations made on SPDs during the public engagement stages will be recorded by the Council and used to amend the SPD if appropriate to do so.
  
- 4.5** For each stage consultation undertaken in relation to an SPD, we will produce a Statement of Consultation which summarises all the comments received and how these comments have been used to update the consultation document or inform the strategy moving forward. Where comments have been raised that cannot be addressed, this will also be set out in the Statement of Consultation. Where there are comments received which are not directly relevant to the consultation in question, these will be shared with the relevant people within the council.

## Non-statutory guidance

- 4.6** From time to time we may also produce non-statutory guidance which does not have SPD status. If this is the case we would expect to carry out consultation in the same manner as for SPDs as detailed above.

### What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

**5.1** Neighbourhood planning was introduced through the Localism Act 2011 and is a means for local communities to take the lead on shaping how their area is developed. Communities can prepare **Neighbourhood Plans** (often referred to as Neighbourhood Development Plans) which set out specific, non-strategic<sup>6</sup> planning policies to help shape and guide development in their area. Neighbourhood Plans sit alongside the Local Plan in being the starting point for considering planning applications.



prepared by those organisations.

**5.2** It is important to note that Neighbourhood Plans cannot promote less development than set out in the Local Plan and cannot influence planning decisions already made. They should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies.

**5.3** In areas with parish and town councils, a Neighbourhood Plan must be

### What is a Neighbourhood Development Order?

**5.4** Communities can also prepare **Neighbourhood Development Orders** (including community right to build orders). Through these, certain types of development, which is supported by the community, are automatically granted planning permission without the need to go through the usual process. For example, this could be certain types of extensions to houses or improvements to shop fronts.

### Consultation methods

**5.5** The town or parish council is responsible for public consultation and engagement in the earlier stages of the process, whilst WBC undertakes consultation on the final draft version of the plan, arranges for an Independent Examination of the plan to take place, and organises the referendum stage of the process on behalf of the parish/town council. Consultation methods are set out in the table below and more information on the process is detailed in Figure 6.

<sup>6</sup> See paragraphs 17 – 23 of the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) for more detail on strategic and non-strategic policies.

Table 3 – Neighbourhood Plan consultation methods

Stage of preparation and intended outcomes	Minimum Consultation methods	Possible additional methods	Duration
<p><b>Area designation</b> – where the parish/town council applies to the Council to be designed a neighbourhood area. This in effect confirms the right to prepare a neighbourhood plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council will discuss neighbourhood planning with parish/town council’s thinking of progressing a plan</li> <li>• Where a parish council applies for the whole of a parish to be designated as a neighbourhood planning area, the council must designate it – no consultation is required.</li> <li>• The council will publicise on its website when a neighbourhood area is designated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate use of social media to publicise area designations</li> </ul>	<p>In most cases this isn’t applicable but a minimum of 4 weeks where a neighbourhood forum application is made</p>
<p><b>Pre-submission consultation</b> – this is where the town/parish council runs their own consultation on the plan before submitting it to the borough council</p>	<p>To be determined by the parish/town council with advice from WBC</p>	<p>To be determined by the parish/town council with advice from WBC</p>	<p>Minimum 6 weeks</p>
<p><b>Submission Consultation</b> – This is where the Neighbourhood Group submits its plan to the council and we run a consultation on the plan to seek comments from a range of stakeholders</p>	<p>If the council finds that the plan or order meets the legal requirements it will formally publicise and consult in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written/Email consultations with statutory consultees, general consultees on our live database, other relevant stakeholders, individuals and organisations as well as any additional individuals or organisations that have since expressed a wish to be consulted or have previously made comments;</li> <li>• Making consultation documents available on the Council’s website and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate use of social media to advertise consultation</li> </ul>	<p>Minimum of 6 weeks</p>

	<p>hard copies available at the Council offices;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making any appropriate supporting evidence base documents available on the website</li> <li>• Invite representations on the document through appropriately placed press advertisement, notices on the Council's website, articles/information in the council's existing forms of communication</li> <li>• Collate the representations made to send to the examiner.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Examination, referendum and adoption</b> - The Examination is run by an independent Examiner that is appointed by the Council. The Inspector will consider all representations and all evidence. The Inspector may have additional questions of the parish/town council or respondees and may choose to set up hearing sessions, though typically the examination is via submissions in writing. The Examiner will give their view on whether the plan meets the basic conditions<sup>7</sup> and if so whether it should progress to referendum. If there is a positive referendum result (more than half the votes cast support the plan) a neighbourhood plan becomes part of the development plan for the borough. It therefore will have the same weight in the planning decision making process as other development plan documents such as those referred to in the sections above</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council will appoint an examiner on behalf of the qualifying body and publish the Examiner's report on its website</li> <li>• Council will publish notice for the referendum in accordance with the regulations on its website.</li> <li>• Provide advice to the neighbourhood group about neutral promotional material they can publish to advertise the referendum</li> <li>• Council will declare result of referendum on its website</li> <li>• Council will publish the adoption statement on its website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate use of social media to publicise referendum and adoption</li> </ul>	<p>Adoption must take place within 8 weeks of a successful referendum.</p>

<sup>7</sup> Set out at paragraph 8(2) of schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as introduced through the Localism Act 2011 – see here: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/schedule/10/enacted>

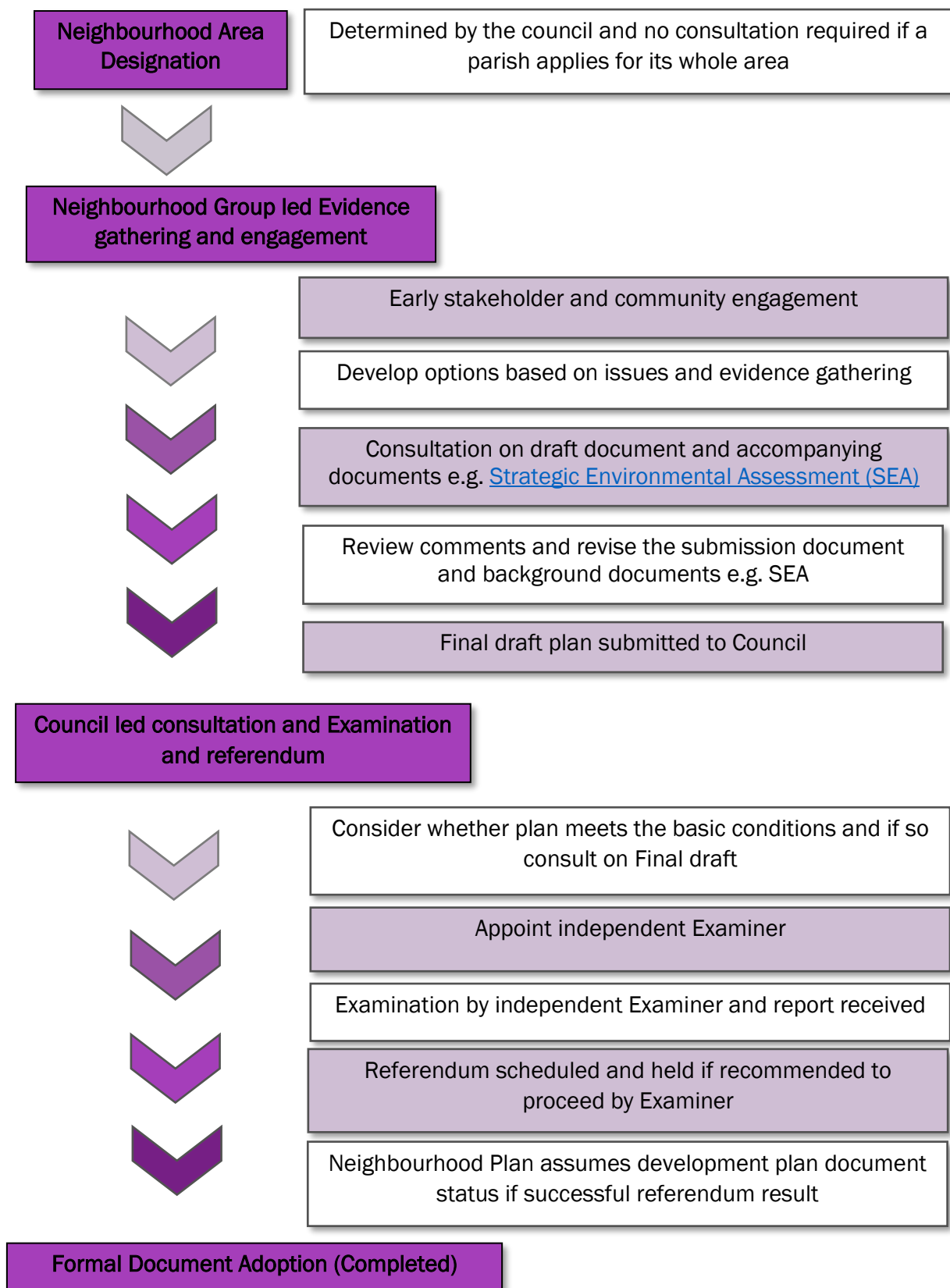
## How the Council will support Neighbourhood Planning

**5.6** Local authorities have a legal duty to provide support to groups preparing a neighbourhood plan. WBC actively supports neighbourhood planning and will work positively and collaboratively with neighbourhood plan groups. In order to support and assist neighbourhood planning, WBC will:

- Based on what the group wish to achieve, provide initial advice on the suitability of pursuing a plan/order, an overview of what is involved and what the potential scope to consider might be;
- share best practice examples from plans or case law;
- provide ongoing advice on general planning matters, share relevant data and technical reports for the evidence base;
- make officers available for meetings, as appropriate, with the neighbourhood planning group to offer informal advice where our specialist knowledge is necessary;
- provide formal written advice in response to specific consultations where considered appropriate;
- create and produce maps as appropriate (please note that the cost of printing will likely fall to the town/parish council)
- highlight national policies which will need to be considered;
- provide advice on the legal requirements for neighbourhood planning;
- share information on key contacts and stakeholders;
- make venues available where appropriate and assist in arranging community engagement activities where support is needed, to avoid consultation overload and maximise efficiencies of resources;
- check the plan prior to formal submission incorporating comments from key specialists (for example development management, highways, conservation, and policy teams etc);
- participate in meetings of the neighbourhood planning body or its working groups, where our specialist knowledge is necessary;
- provide advice on who needs to be consulted especially in order to help the draft proposals meet the [basic conditions](#);
- provide assistance and advice in laying out and illustrating a plan (please note that should significant time be required, the cost of officer time will likely fall to the neighbourhood plan group);
- provide advice regarding the referendum including campaigning can and can't dos.
- organise the examination and referendum

**Adopted Neighbourhood Plans are very important planning document which form part of the Council's development plan. They are vital when it comes to making decisions on planning applications.**

Figure 6: The Neighbourhood Plan Process



5.7 To find out more about neighbourhood planning in your area you can contact your Town or Parish Council. A list of those creating [neighbourhood plans](#) can be found online.

## 6 Planning applications

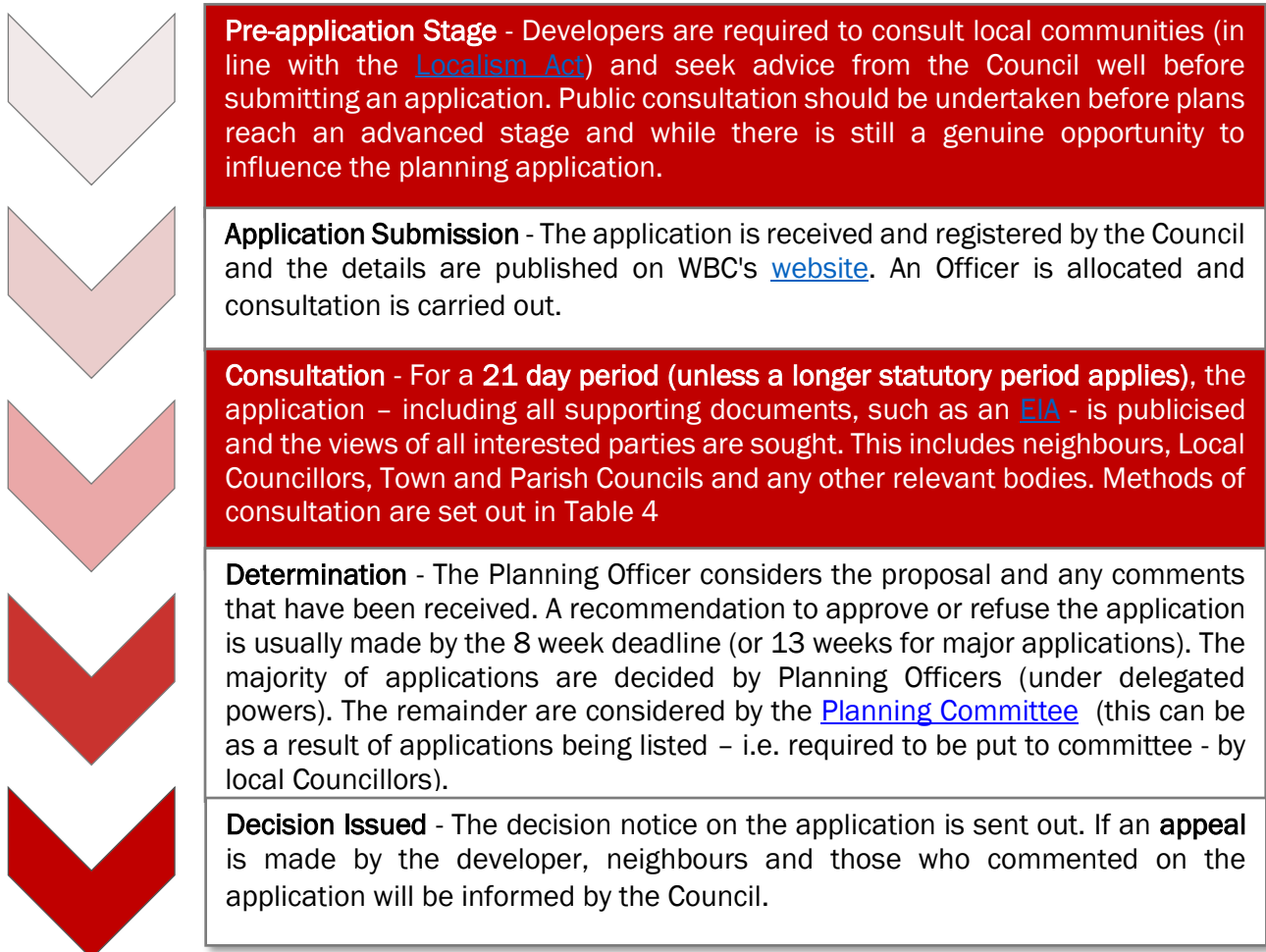
### Determination of Planning Applications

- 6.1** Once a planning application has been received, the Council will take steps to consult on it. The basic steps of determining a planning application are shown in Figure 7 with the main stage(s) of public engagement highlighted in red. All applications can be viewed on WBC's website by entering the site address or reference number on the [applications search page](#).
- 6.2** Before submitting a planning application it is recommended applicants consult with immediate neighbours and people who may be affected by proposals. For major and large proposed developments applicants need to consult more widely among the local community.

Figure 7: The Planning Application Process

#### Key

 Public Engagement Stages



6.3 Some types of development are allowed automatically under national legislation and do not require a planning application to be submitted, for instance certain types of household extensions or some changes in the use of land or buildings. These are generally referred to as ‘permitted development’. More information about this, including whether the Council needs to notify neighbours about particular permitted development proposals – for example, where a rear extension will be more than 4 metres in length – can be found at [www.planningportal.co.uk](http://www.planningportal.co.uk).

## Methods of Engagement

6.4 Wokingham Borough Council will use of a variety of different methods to meet our [Three Principles](#) of Inform, Consult, Involve. A number of examples are given in Table 4 (please note this is not intended to be an exhaustive list and the examples given below may relate to both the plan-making and planning application process).

The Council expects that developers should utilise these and other methods to Inform, Consult and Involve those who will be affected by development proposals. This should take place prior to any planning application being made so that the community has an opportunity to engage with and influence proposals in their area.

Table 4: Examples of Methods of Engagement

INFORM – Letting you know about it
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site Notices</li> <li>• Websites</li> <li>• Advertisements in local press</li> <li>• Press releases</li> <li>• Notice boards (including Town and Parish Council boards)</li> <li>• Newsletters, leaflets, magazines</li> <li>• Public exhibitions</li> <li>• Email/text messages</li> <li>• Social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook)</li> </ul>
CONSULT – Asking for your comments on it
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letters/emails/postcards</li> <li>• Public forums/discussions</li> <li>• Online forums</li> <li>• Feedback forms/questionnaires/surveys</li> <li>• Public meetings (e.g. Planning Committee)</li> <li>• Public workshops</li> <li>• Exhibitions</li> </ul>



## INVOLVE – You can influence how it develops

- Workshops/forums/focus groups
- Councillor surgeries
- Public meetings

## Community Engagement in Planning Applications




**6.5** Planning applications are categorised depending on the type and scale of the proposal. Definitions of each category are given in Appendix 2. Table 5 sets out the common methods of engagement that may be undertaken for different types of planning application. These methods are not intended to be exhaustive and in some cases additional or alternative approaches may be appropriate.

**6.6** A common criticism of community engagement is that it can be approached as a ‘tick-box exercise’ in order to meet a list of set requirements. To prevent this being the case, developers are encouraged to seek advice from WBC at an early stage on which methods are likely to be the most appropriate for the type and location of development being proposed. All applications should include a report setting out how consultation has been undertaken and what the outcomes were in order to demonstrate that a genuine attempt has been made to **Inform, Consult** and **Involve** the local community.

**In each case the Council expects the developer to be actively involved in engaging the community (as indicated in Table 4).**

Table 5: Indicative Methods of Engagement for Planning Applications

 - Wokingham Borough Council (what we will do)

 - Developers (what developers should do)

Method of Engagement	Householder Applications		Minor Applications		Major Applications†		Large Scale Major Applications		Other	
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Letters, email & postcards	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Site Notices*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Website	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	
Advert in Local Press**	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	
Press Releases							✓	✓		
Public Meetings/Forums						✓	✓	✓		
Public Exhibitions							✓	✓		
Social Media						✓	✓	✓		
Workshops							✓	✓		
Leaflets						✓	✓	✓		
One to one meetings***		✓		✓						

\* Site notices are only required by law for some types of proposed development, e.g. major developments and changes to a listed building. The council however supports the use of site notices for all types of proposed development as an effective way of informing people. Council officers will put up site notices where required by law. For other types of development, a site notice will be sent to the applicant with a request that it is displayed.

\*\*This does not apply to all applications – minor and householder applications only require an advertisement in certain circumstances, such as works affecting a listed building.

\*\*\*These one to one meetings tend to be small scale, i.e. a householder meeting with their neighbours to discuss a proposed extension.

†Major housing applications cover 10 up to 199 units. For larger schemes developers should consider that methods like a website and press release would also be appropriate.

**6.7** These methods or similar can be utilised repeatedly at different stages of the development process (pre-application, submission to the Council and during implementation of the scheme). However early community engagement - as summarised in table 6 below - will benefit both developers and the community by enabling the creation of appropriate, comprehensive development schemes and enabling subsequent applications to have a smoother progression through the planning system. The council’s approach will be consistent with the NPPF<sup>8</sup> which states that: ‘Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot’.

**Table 6: Early community engagement for Planning Applications**

For minor Developments:	For major Developments:
<p>Developers should inform the local community of proposals before a planning application is made, even if this is just visiting or writing to the immediate neighbours to tell them about plans for an extension.</p> <p>Neighbours’ concerns should be taken into account and if necessary changes made to proposals before an application is made.</p>	<p>Engagement must start at an early stage and include various methods to reach as many people as possible. This should include local Councillors and Town and Parish Councils.).</p> <p>Community engagement must form an integral part of the initial design process. Developers should show how they have applied the three principles of Inform, Consult and Involve in their application submission and how they used the feedback to inform the proposal.</p>

**6.8** Quality engagement means collaboration: consulting and involving people as well as informing them (in line with the [Three Principles](#)).

**6.9** More information about methods of engagement can be found online, for example the RTPi website which provides Good Practice Guides (available at [www.rtpi.org.uk](http://www.rtpi.org.uk)).

**6.10** Please note that where it is required, consultation for permitted development schemes differs from that for planning applications. More information about this is available at [www.planningportal.co.uk](http://www.planningportal.co.uk)

<sup>8</sup> This is set out at paragraph 128 with regards to design: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/728643/Revised\\_NPPF\\_2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/728643/Revised_NPPF_2018.pdf)

## Hard to Reach Groups

**6.11** The Council also recognises that certain parts of the community are more difficult to engage using traditional methods. This can be for a variety of reasons. The Council will seek to engage with all of the groups who may be affected by proposed development as well as expecting developers to do the same. Table 6 gives examples of how this may be achieved:

**Table 7: Engaging Hard to Reach Groups**

Group	How to Engage Them
Young People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Websites</li> <li>- Young peoples' forums</li> <li>- Online forums</li> <li>- Emails/texts</li> <li>- Social media</li> <li>- Displays at schools, colleges, libraries, youth centres, local businesses (e.g. cafes, bars), sports grounds</li> <li>- School Councils</li> <li>- Youth MP</li> <li>- Competitions (e.g. photography, creative writing)</li> </ul>
Older People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Letters</li> <li>- Press Releases</li> <li>- Newsletters</li> <li>- Forums/meetings</li> <li>- Displays at church halls/community centres, libraries, GP surgeries, local businesses (e.g. cafes, supermarkets)</li> </ul>
'Time Poor' People (e.g. parents with young children)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Websites</li> <li>- Displays at nurseries, schools, GP surgeries, local businesses (e.g. cafes, supermarkets)</li> <li>- Social media</li> </ul>
Gypsies and Travellers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Forums/meetings with community groups</li> </ul>
People with Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Offer newsletters in different formats (e.g. large print)</li> </ul>

	- Ensure appropriate access and facilities for meetings/exhibitions
<b>People from Deprived Areas</b>	- Forums/meetings with community groups - Mobile exhibitions
<b>People for whom English is not their first language</b>	- Make documents available in different languages upon request - Targeted displays at community/faith centres

### How will we use your comments?

**The written comments that are made to the council on a planning application will be considered as part of the decision making process**

- 6.12** More information about material planning considerations can be found online at [www.planningportal.co.uk](http://www.planningportal.co.uk). All of the comments received are made available for the public on the Council's website, where comments are directly uploaded by members of the public themselves.
- 6.13** The Case Officer's report for every planning application quantifies the amount of comments received during the consultation period and summarises the main points raised. The report goes on to explain the recommendation to either approve or refuse and is made available for all members of the public to view once the application has been determined.
- 6.14** In the case of an appeal, the Planning Inspector will also look at all of the consultation responses received when reaching a decision.

### Planning Committee

- 6.15** The Planning Committee is made up of elected [Borough Councillors](#) (often referred to as Ward Members). To assist the Planning Committee, Council Officers will provide a report on the proposed development. The report will set out relevant planning policy, provide a summary of the comments received from interested people and organisations, and make a recommendation on whether permission should be granted.

**6.16** Only certain types of applications go to the Committee – such as major applications or minor applications with strong public interest which can be listed by the relevant Borough Councillor for that area to be determined by Committee. Planning Committee meetings are open to the public and anybody has the right to speak on an application, provided that they



have prearranged to do so. This must be done by 5pm on the last working day before the meeting. The agenda for the meeting – including the Council Officer report for each application – is published on the Council’s website a week beforehand.

**6.17** There are three dedicated speaking slots per application for the Town or Parish Council; objectors; and applicants, agents or supporters. All parties wishing to address the Committee must register online their

intention to speak in advance of the meeting.. Each of the three slots is allocated a maximum of three minutes for speakers to make their points; if several people (be they residents, councillors, agents) wish to speak then the combined length has to fit into the specified three minute time limit. It is therefore recommended that if large numbers of people share similar views on an application then they should organise a spokesperson to represent them. After each Planning Committee the minutes of the meeting are made available to view on the Council’s website.

**6.18** In the event that a planning application is to be determined by Committee, anybody that has commented on the planning application will be notified of proceedings.

## Appendix 1 – Consultation bodies

Wokingham Borough Council is actively engaging with neighbouring local authorities on planning matters that affect the wider area (such as transport links and waste disposal).

This is part of the Duty to Co-operate introduced by the Localism Act 2011 which is considered in the Examination of a Local Plan. In respect of the Duty to Co-operate the following consultation bodies are relevant.

### **Consultation Bodies in respect of the Duty to Co-operate in relation to planning of sustainable development:**

- Neighbouring local planning authorities (in Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Surrey, London Boroughs and Buckinghamshire);
- Civil Aviation Authority;
- Historic England ;
- Environment Agency;
- Highways England;
- Homes England;
- Integrated Transport Authority;
- Thames Water;
- South East Water
- Natural England;
- Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership;
- Wokingham CCG;
- Bracknell CCG;
- North Hampshire CCG;
- North East Hampshire;
- Farnham CCG;
- North and West Reading CCG;
- South Reading CCG;
- Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead CCG;
- Office of Rail Regulation; and
- Berkshire Local Nature Partnership.

### **In respect of Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, the designated consultation bodies in the UK are:**

- Historic England;
- Environment Agency; and
- Natural England.

### **Specific Consultation Bodies:**

- A relevant authority any part of whose area is in or adjoins the area of the Local Planning Authority (this includes parish councils: Berkshire Councils);
- Coal Authority;
- Historic England;

- Environment Agency;
- Highways England;
- Homes and Communities Agency;
- Natural England;
- Network Rail;
- Any person to whom the electronic communications code applies by virtue of a direction given under Section 106 (3) (a) of the Communications Act 2003 (e.g. BT);
- Any person who owns or controls electronic communications apparatus situated in any part of the area of the Local Planning Authority (e.g. BT, EE, Virgin Media etc.); and any bodies from the following list who are exercising functions in any part of the area of the Local Planning Authority:
  - Bracknell and Ascot CCG, Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead CCG;
  - Person to whom a licence has been granted under Section 6(1)(b) or (c) of the Electricity Act 1989;
  - Person to whom a licence has been granted under Section 7(2) of the Gas Act 1986 (e.g. British Gas)
  - Sewage undertaker; and
  - Water undertaker.

### **General Consultation Bodies**

- Voluntary bodies some or all of whose activities wholly or partially benefit any part of the Local Planning Authority's area (e.g. Community Action Berkshire, residents associations and tenants groups etc.);
- Bodies which represent the interests of different racial, ethnic or national groups in the Local Planning Authority's area;
- Bodies which represent the interests of different religious groups in the Local Planning Authority's area;
- Bodies which represent the interests of disabled persons in the Local Planning Authority's area;



## Appendix 2 – Types of Planning Application

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### Householder Applications

- Development of an existing dwelling, or development within the curtilage of a dwelling. This does not include an application for change of use or an application to change the number of dwellings in a building.

### Minor Applications

- New Dwellings - 1-9 dwellings and/or a site up to 0.499 hectares in area
- Offices / Retail & Development / Light Industry – up to 999 m<sup>2</sup> of new floor space and/or a site up to 0.99 hectares in area
- General industry, storage / warehousing - up to 999m<sup>2</sup> of new floor space and/or a site up to 0.99 hectares in area
- Retail distribution & servicing - up to 999m<sup>2</sup> of new floor space and/or a site up to 0.99 hectares in area
- Gypsy & Traveller pitches – 1-9 new pitches
- All other minor developments

### Major Applications

- New Dwellings – 10-199 dwellings and/or a site of 0.5-3.99 hectares in area
- Offices / R&D / Light Industry – 1,000-9,999m<sup>2</sup> of new floor space and/or a site of 1-1.99 hectares in area
- General industry, storage / warehousing - 1,000-9,999m<sup>2</sup> of new floor space and/or a site of 1-1.99 hectares in area
- Retail distribution & servicing - 1,000-9,999m<sup>2</sup> of new floor space and/or a site of 1-1.99 hectares in area
- Gypsy & Traveller pitches – 10 - 199 new pitches created
- All other small scale major developments

### Large Scale Major Applications

- New Dwellings – 200+ and/or a site of 4 hectares or more
- Offices / R&D/ Light Industry - 10,000m<sup>2</sup> of new floor space and/or a site of 2 hectares or more
- General industry, storage / warehousing - 10,000m<sup>2</sup> of new floor space and/or a site of 2 hectares or more
- Retail distribution & servicing - 10,000m<sup>2</sup> of new floor space and/or a site of 2 hectares or more
- Gypsy & Traveller pitches – 200+ new pitches created
- All other large scale major developments

### Other Applications

- Minerals Processing
- Change of Use
- Listed Building Consent (to alter/extend)
- Listed Building Consent (to demolish)
- Certificates of Lawful Development
- Notifications



## Statement of Community Involvement

Wokingham Borough Council Civic Offices,  
Shute End, Wokingham Berkshire RG40 1WR

Email: [PolicyandPlans@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:PolicyandPlans@wokingham.gov.uk)